

statue of Sainte Barbe. No more striking position could have been chosen for it. The image was impressive by reason of its very unexpectedness.

Hardly conscious of her action, Yvonne turned to the saint now to invoke her help. She murmured an incoherent prayer, and as she gazed distraught at the Madonna-like figure, so calm, so watchful in its aery, she heard the rhythmic clank of iron as the rings moved in their sockets. One fleeting glimpse over the parapet revealed Tollemache in the act of swinging himself to the pair of rings above the rock that gave foothold.

Again he peered down at her, twisting his head awkwardly for the purpose. "Nothing much to it," he laughed, jerking out breathless words. "Of course it was a bit of a twister when that ring came away; but—"

He was safe! Yvonne deigned him no further heed. She hurried to Barbe's side.

FOR goodness' sake help me to shake her and slap her hands!" she cried to Madeleine. "Monsieur Tollemache has spoiled the day for us already, and Mère Pitou will be ill if she thinks Barbe is hurt."

Barbe, a vigorous little village girl, soon yielded to drastic treatment, and was eager as either of her friends to conceal from her mother the fact that she had fainted.

Tollemache, feeling rather sheepish in face of Yvonne's quiet scorn, strolled to the top of the steps down which Père Jean had scuttled. The old man's voice reached him in despairing appeal.

"M'sieu! Speak, if you are alive! Speak, pour l'amour de Dieu!"

"Hello there!" he cried. "What's the row about? Here I am!"

Père Jean gazed up with bulging eyes, and himself nearly fell over the precipice. "Ah, Dieu merci!" he quavered. "But, M'sieu, didn't you hear me telling you that the prefect—"

"What's the matter?" broke in Ingersoll's quiet tones. "You all look as if you had seen a daylight ghost."

"I behaved like a vain idiot," explained Tollemache, seeing that none of the girls was minded to answer. "I tried to climb round the tower by those rings, and scared Yvonne and the others rather badly."

"How far did you go?"

"Oh, I was on the last lap; but the ring gave way."

Ingersoll knew the place of old, and needed no elaborate essay on the danger Tollemache had escaped. His grave manner betokened the depth of his annoyance.

"What happened then?" he said.

"I went back, of course."

"Where did the ring break?"

"It didn't break. I pulled the staple out. That one—you see where the gap is."

Ingersoll leaned over the parapet. A glance sufficed. "You crossed the valley face of the tower twice?" he said.

"Couldn't help myself, old sport."

"Then you described yourself with marvelous accuracy,—a vain idiot!"

"Dash it all!" protested Tollemache. "I've only done the same as scores of Frenchmen."

"Many of whom lost their lives. You had a pretty close call. Larry, I'm ashamed of you!"

Mère Pitou added to Tollemache's discomfiture by the biting comment that her man got round the tower, whereas he had failed.

ALTOGETHER it was a somewhat depressed party that was shown round the quaint old chapel of the patroness of armorers and artillerymen by Père Jean, who had lost a good deal of his smiling bonhomie; and eyed Tollemache fearfully, evidently suspecting him of harboring some fantastic design of dropping from the gallery to the floor, or leaping from the chapel roof to the cliff.

Their spirits revived, however, as they descended a steep path to Sainte Barbe's well. Every chapel of Saint Barbara has, or ought to have, a well, and that at Le Faouet (three syllables, please, and sound the T when you are in Brittany) is specially famous for its prophetic properties in affairs of the heart. Thus, a spring bubbles into a trough surmounted by a canopy and image of the saint. In the center of the trough, beneath two feet of limpid water, the spring rises through an irregular orifice, roughly four inches square, and all unmarried young people who visit the shrine try to drop pins into the hole. Success at the first effort means that the fortunate aspirant for matrimony will either be married within a year or receive a favorable offer.

So, after luncheon, which had been carried by a boy from the village on the hill opposite the Pilgrims' Way, the girls produced a supply of pins. Barbe was the first to try her luck. Three pins wriggled to the floor of the well; but a fourth disappeared, and Mère Pitou took the omen seriously.

"You will be married when you are twenty-one, *ma petite*," she said, "and quite soon enough too. Then your troubles will begin."

Madeleine failed six times, and gave up in a huff. Yvonne's second pin vanished.

"O, là, là!" cried Mère Pitou, still deeply interested

in this consultation of the fates, "Mark my words, you'll refuse the first and take the second!"

The old lady darted a quick look at Ingersoll; but he was smiling. He had schooled himself for an ordeal, and his expression did not change. Tollemache, too, created a diversion by seizing a pin, holding it high above the surface of the water, whereas each of the girls had sought apparently to lessen the distance as much as possible, and dropping it out of sight straight away.

"Look at that!" he crowed. "My girl will say *snap* as soon as I say *snip*. Here's her engagement ring!"

Plunging his left hand into a pocket, he brought to light the ring and staple torn from Sainte Barbe's tower. When hanging with one hand to the last hold-fast on the wall overlooking sixty feet of sheer precipice, he had calmly pocketed the ring that proved treacherous.

Evidently Laurence Tollemache was a young man who might be trusted not to lose his head in an emergency.

Mère Pitou was not to be persuaded to tempt fortune, and Ingersoll, who was sketching the well rapidly and most effectively, was left alone, because Barbe, who would have called him to come in his turn, was bidden sharply by her mother to mind her own business.

TOLLEMACHE and Yvonne climbed the rocky path together when they began the return journey to Le Faouet. In the rays of the afternoon sun the rough granite boulders sparkled as though they were studded with innumerable small diamonds.

"Haven't you forgiven me yet, Yvonne?" he said, noticing her distraught air.

She almost started, so far away were her thoughts. "Oh, let us forget that stupidity," she replied. "I was thinking of something very different. Tell me, Lorry, has my father ever spoken to you of my mother?"

"No," he said.

"Do you know where she is buried?"

"No."

She sighed. Her light-hearted companion's sudden taciturnity was not lost on her. Neither Madame Pitou, Ingersoll's friend and landlady during eighteen years, nor Tollemache, who worked with him daily, could read his eyes like Yvonne, and she knew he was acting a part when he smiled because Sainte Barbe's well announced that she should be married at the second asking. And the odd thing was that she had endeavored to drop the first pin so that it would fall into the fateful space. None but she herself had noted how it plunged slantwise through the water as though drawn by a lodestone.

Even Tollemache nursed a grievance against the

CHIEF CHARACTERS

YVONNE INGERSOLL, charming daughter of an American artist.

LAURENCE TOLLEMACHE, a young American, in love with Yvonne.

JOHN INGERSOLL, American artist, father of Yvonne.

MRS. CARMAC, American widow of a rich Englishman.

MADELEINE DEMORET, Breton village belle, Yvonne's chum.

"PERIDOT" LARRAIDOU, a Breton fisherman, in love with Madeleine.

MADAME PITOU, a vivacious Breton mother, with whom the Ingersolls are boarding.

HARVEY RAYMOND, Carmac's former secretary.

RUPERT FOSDYKE, scheming nephew of Carmac.

SCENE, Brittany, the westernmost corner of France.



"Among the trees in the background rose the diminutive spire of Sainte Barbe's chapel."

well's divination. "I say," he broke in, "that pin proposition is all nonsense, don't you think?"

For some occult reason she refused to answer as he hoped she would. "You never can tell," she said. Mère Pitou believes in it, and she has had a long experience of life's vagaries."

From some distance came Madeleine's plaint. "Just imagine! Six times! In six years I shall be twenty-five. I don't credit a word of it—so there! At the last *pardon* Peridot danced with me all the afternoon."

Even little Barbe was not satisfied. "Mama said the other day," she confided, "that I might be married before I was twenty."

Ingersoll and Mère Pitou, bringing up the rear, were silent, Madame because this hill also was steep, and Ingersoll because of thoughts that came unbidden. In fact, Sainte Barbe had perplexed some of her pilgrims.

CHAPTER II. The Feast of Sainte Barbe

ON the morning of December 4 in that same year a postman walked up the narrow path leading to the front door of Mère Pitou's house in the Rue Mathias, Pont Aven, and handed in a bundle of letters. The family was at breakfast, the *petit déjeuner* of coffee and rolls that stays the appetite in every French household until a more substantial meal is prepared at noon. The weather was mild and bright, though a gusty sou'westerly wind was blowing; so doors and windows were open.

Barbe saw the postman ere he unlatched the garden gate, and rose excitedly, nearly upsetting a cup in her haste.

"Why, what's the rush?" cried Ingersoll. "And who in the world are all these letters for?"

"Father dear, have you forgotten the date? This is Barbe's name day," said Yvonne.

"Oh, that's the explanation of tonight's festivity," laughed Ingersoll. "Sorry. It quite slipped my mind. Of course she has wagonloads of friends who make a point of remembering these things. Lucky Barbe! And, by the way, Madame, what about those pictures which the Lady of Le Faouet was to dispose of? It's high time she was getting busy. Here are three months sped, and, if anything, rather a slump in Ingersolls. Actually, my best commission thus far is a series of picture postcards of Le Pouldu—with benefits deferred till next season."

"Perhaps the good saint knew that you kept your tongue in your cheek while you were seeking her help," retorted Madame.

"Impossible. It was lolling out. You ungrateful one, didn't I climb the hill twice for your sake?"

BARBE exchanged a friendly word with the postman, who was well aware of the cause of this sudden increase in the mail delivery at the cottage. Then she ran in.

"One for you, M'sieu—all the rest for me," she announced gleefully.

Ingersoll took his letter. It bore the Pouldu postmark and the printed name of a hotel. Usually such missives came from brother artists; but the handwriting on the envelop was essentially of the type that French hotelkeepers cultivate for the utter bamboozling of their foreign patrons. Yvonne glanced at it with some curiosity, and was still more surprised to see

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